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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAQI CONSTITUTION
PARIS - MONDAY, AUGUST 29, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

IRAQI CONSTITUTION

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

DOMESTIC POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES DOMINATE TODAY'S FRONT PAGES AND MOST EDITORIALS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION WHICH FRONTS: "IRAQ TRIPS BUSH." INSIDE, A THREE-PAGE REPORT IS ENTITLED: "TIRED OF THE WAR, PUBLIC OPINION REJECTS BUSH." IN HIS ARTICLE PASCAL RICHE EXPLAINS WHY A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS "DISAPPROVE OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S IRAQI POLICY" CONCLUDING THAT THE PRESIDENT IS FACING "A HISTORIC PRESIDENTIAL LACK OF POPULARITY." THE ARTICLE ALSO MENTIONS SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL'S CRITICISM OF THE WAR: "THE LONGER THE U.S. STAY IN IRAQ, THE MORE THE MIDDLE EAST IS DESTABILIZED." A SEPARATE ARTICLE AND EDITORIAL ARE DEVOTED TO THE IRAQI CONSTITUTION WHILE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE COMMENTATOR GILLES DELAFON TITLES HIS ANALYSIS: "IRAQ ON THE BRINK OF BREAKING." (SEE PART C)

AS PRESIDENT CHIRAC PREPARES TO MEET THE ASSEMBLED CORPS OF FRENCH AMBASSADORS THIS MORNING, LE FIGARO GIVES A HINT OF THE ISSUES HE WILL BE COVERING IN HIS REMARKS: "GIVING NEW MOMENTUM TO EUROPE, ACTING AGAINST THE THREATS TO COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND OPPOSING MULTILATERALISM TO THE EXCESSES OF GLOBALIZATION: THESE ARE THE THREE DIRECTIONS CHIRAC WILL GIVE TO HIS AMBASSADORS. CHIRAC WILL SPEAK IN FAVOR OF A STRONGER EUROPE, USEFUL TO THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP, AS HE RECALLS THE COMMUNITY OF VALUES BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE U.S. . CHIRAC IS AWAITED ON HIS POSITION ON THE GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION OF THE EU. ABOUT TURKEY IN PARTICULAR, HE IS EXPECTED TO DEFINE THE EU-25'S DETERMINATION TO ASK ANKARA TO CLARIFY ITS POSITION ON CYPRUS. HE WILL RECALL DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN FIGHTING AGAINST TERRORISM. AND INVITE IRAN BACK TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. SHORT OF WHICH FRANCE AND ITS PARTNERS WILL HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO GO BEFORE THE UNSC. FRANCE'S EMISSARIES WILL ALSO BE EXPECTED TO ENCOURAGE REFORMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAQI CONSTITUTION

"FAILURES"

GERARD DUPUY IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (08/29): "WITHOUT THE ALLIED ARMIES, NAMELY THE AMERICAN ARMY, NEVER WOULD THE IRAQIS HAVE BEEN SO CLOSE TO HAVING A CONSTITUTION SO WELL TAILORED TO THEIR MULTIPLE NEEDS. A LITTLE ISLAM, A LITTLE HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS INTRICATE DISTRIBUTION IS ALSO THE ONLY CHANCE FOR THE TEXT TO BE ADOPTED BY THE IRAQIS. THE SUNNIS, WHO HAVE VIOLENTLY REJECTED THE U.S. PRESENCE. COULD LEAD THE PROJECT TO FAIL. A PROJECT WHICH IS ALSO THE ONLY TRUMP CARD BUSH HAS IN HIS HAND TO BRING BACK HIS TROOPS. WITH 'THE BOYS' IN MIND, BUSH PUSHED HARD FOR THE CONSTITUTION. BUT IF IT FAILS, PRESIDENT BUSH WILL GET THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT HE WANTED. WHILE TRYING TO GAIN TIME, HE COULD END UP HAVING LOST TIME. BECAUSE THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE COUNT DOWN HAS BEGUN IN THE MINDS OF THOSE SURROUNDING THE PRESIDENT. HIS PUBLIC OPINION IS AGAINST HIM, AND THE RUMORS OF TROOP DISENGAGEMENT ARE A RESULT OF THE PRESIDENT'S MOUNTING UNPOPULARITY. AS THE GAME PLAY BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT, IT SEEMS THE PRESIDENT HAS LESS AND LESS TIME. ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE, THE PRO-SADDAM INSURGENTS POSSESS A DEADLY WEAPON: TO PROLONG THE SITUATION."

"FOR THE IRAQIS, A CONSTITUTION, BUT PROBLEMS REMAIN"

PIERRE PRIER IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/29): "IF ONE IS TO BELIEVE IRAQI PRESIDENT JALAL TALABANI, IRAQ HAS BEEN SAVED FROM THE RISKS OF A CIVIL WAR. BUT IF ONE LOOK CLOSELY AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL TEXT, NOTHING SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY RESOLVED. THE MAIN CONCERN OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE VARIOUS Factions SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TO GAIN TIME AND GIVE IN TO PRESSURES FROM WASHINGTON, WHICH IS EAGER TO SEE A POSITIVE OUTCOME AND BEGIN MILITARY DISENGAGEMENT PROCEEDINGS. BUT IN REALITY, THE SAME PROBLEMS APPEAR UNRESOLVED. IN BAGHDAD, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR SHOWED LESS ENTHUSIASM THAN PRESIDENT BUSH, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT A REJECTION BY THE SUNNIS ON OCTOBER 15

WOULD CREATE `A PROBLEM.'"

"A HIGH RISK CONSTITUTION"

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (08/29): "AT THE IRAQI PARLIAMENT, VICE-PRESIDENT HUSSEIN CHAHRISTANI REJOICED IN THE `GIFT' OFFERED TO `THE IRAQI PEOPLE.' BUT THE TEXT COULD WELL TURN OUT TO BE A POISONED GIFT. THE IRAQIS HAVE NEVER SPOKEN SO MUCH OF THE RISKS OF `A CIVIL WAR' SINCE THEY STARTED DISCUSSING THE CONSTITUTIONAL TEXT."

"IRAQ ON THE BRINK OF BREAKING"

GILLES DELAFON IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE (08/29): "IT IS WASHINGTON'S WHOLE STRATEGY OF RECONCILIATION WHICH IS AT STAKE AND COULD FAIL. PRESIDENT BUSH'S WORRIES ARE SUCH THAT HE EVEN CALLED THE SHIITE LEADER EL-HAKIM ASKING FOR MORE FLEXIBILITY. THE DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION THAT WILL BE COMING OUT OF THE BALLOTS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A GUARANTEE FOR PACIFYING IRAQ. AND THE NEW VICTIM OF IRAQ'S PARADOXES IS PRESIDENT BUSH HIMSELF: NOT ONLY HAS HE HAD TO COURT EL-HAKIM, IRAQ'S PRO-IRAN FIGURE, TO ALLOW MORE ROOM TO FORMER PRO-SADDAM PROPONENTS, HE IS ALSO BEING THREATENED BY AMERICAN EVANGELISTS WHO SAY THEY WILL WITHDRAW THEIR SUPPORT IF THE IRAQIS ADOPT A CONSTITUTION WHICH GIVES TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO ISLAM." STAPLETON